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CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM
ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS
I. Inquiry Submittal

a. Project Title and Applicant Name
Walnut Creek Watershed Riparian, Fisheries and Water Quality Enhancement Program; Urban Creeks Council (UCC); Laurel Marcus: 510-531-3101; Pam Romo: 510-939-8979; Beth Stone: 510-540-6669.

b. Project Description and Primary Biological/Ecological Objectives
Develop an enhancement program for the Walnut Creek Watershed-one of the largest tributaries to Suisun Bay and one with a run of steelhead. The program will address restoring instream and shaded riverine aquatic habitats. The program will address stressors such as hydrograph alterations including removal of fish migration barriers; channel form changes involving riparian vegetation restoration, erosion control education and cooling water temperatures for steelhead; water quality including water quality monitoring and assessment; undesirable species interactions including removal of non-native plants and reestablishing natives; land use-urbanization involving preserving habitat on private land, educating and assisting local government in protecting natural habitats and preserving core riparian areas as amenities.

c. Approach/Tasks/Schedule
The Walnut Creek watershed program last for two years and will focus on community based, local efforts to restore biological values and fishery habitat to this urban system. The program would include: 1) develop a model program to remove exotic plants along the many tributary streams in this large system and replant natives in coordination with property owners, youth groups and community organizations; 2) survey the creeks and enhance fish habitat; 3) implement a water quality and temperature monitoring program in conjunction with youth and community groups; 4) create a local group to analyze development and flood control methods in order to: increase habitat restoration, implement the existing plan (Walnut Creek Channel Recreation and Revegetation Project) to revegetate the main creek channel and remove fish barriers, reduce soil erosion and creek channelization during development, and reduce maintenance dredging of the channel.

d. Justification for Project and Funding by CALFED
This project will address many of the stressors identified by CALFED in a comprehensive manner in a major urban watershed. The project is community-based and will involve local government, youth groups and community groups. Involving the community helps to educate urban people on the need for restoration and water quality improvements for fish. The project will serve as a model for addressing habitat issues in urban systems; the Walnut Creek Watershed still supports a steelhead run and could support more fish.

e. Budget Costs and Third Party Impacts
Total Cost Estimate: $500,000; Request from CALFED: $400,000

Third parties are supportive of this project. Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors accepted the Walnut Creek Channel Recreation and Revegetation Project in 1993, yet few of the recommendations have been implemented. The Shell Oil Spill Litigation Settlement Trustees allocated $100,000 for a fish ladder to be built on Walnut Creek. Contra Costa County Flood Control has been an active participant on the Technical Advisory Committee for the Walnut Creek Channel Recreation and Revegetation Project; their future role in providing for flood protection will be balanced with protective measures for listed species (steelhead trout).

f. Applicant Qualifications

Urban Creeks Council, formed in 1983, is a state-wide grass-roots 501(c)3 community organization with more than 30 affiliates and chapters throughout the state. UCC provides leadership to numerous groups and individuals with an interest in preserving, protecting, restoring and enhancing riparian habitat in a variety of settings. The UCC provides services such as: project management, professional restoration tours and workshops, technical assistance, community outreach and education programs, coordination of citizen monitoring projects, in-stream restoration, bank stabilization and revegetation projects, and restoration training for community and youth groups. UCC contracts with professional specialists in such fields as: hydrology and fisheries.

g. Monitoring and Data Evaluation

Urban Creeks Council works in collaborative agreements with government agencies, other community groups and with hired contractors to conduct monitoring, data collection and data evaluation. Specialists will be working in conjunction with UCC to develop standards for data collection and monitoring.

h. Local Support/Coordination with other Programs/Compatibility with CALFED objectives.

Walnut Creek and its surrounding watershed has a very high profile. It is located in a dense urban area, has been primarily managed as a flood control channel, and yet has an impressive population of steelhead which persist in attempting to migrate back to historic headwaters. Media attention has focused on this concern, as shown in recent news articles. (See attachments). A Master Plan developed by the City of Walnut Creek provides for local recreational amenities, restoration and revegetation in key segments of the creek. Community volunteers have turned out in record numbers to participate in revegetation events. The project is compatible with CALFED objectives to reduce conflicts in the Bay Delta Ecosystem, focus on high risk species, improve habitats and provide broad benefits. The proposed watershed project addresses the restoration of habitat within an urban watershed for steelhead trout, which will be listed as endangered in August. This program will provide broad benefits for all the urbanizing areas in this region, protect habitat and endangered species while educating and involving the community and local government in the protection effort.

Walnut Creek fish at risk of death from heatstroke

CCTimes

y JAMES BRUGGERS
ff writer 6/29/93

Combine hot sunshine and al-
red stream beds, and you have a
cipe for poached fish.

That's what's cooking in the East
y.

Volunteer "watershed watchers"
mpling throughout the Walnut
eek basin report fatally high wa-
r temperatures in some areas.
ough no dead fish have been
en, it's only a matter of time be-
re anticipated hot-tublike condi-
ons send some floating belly up.

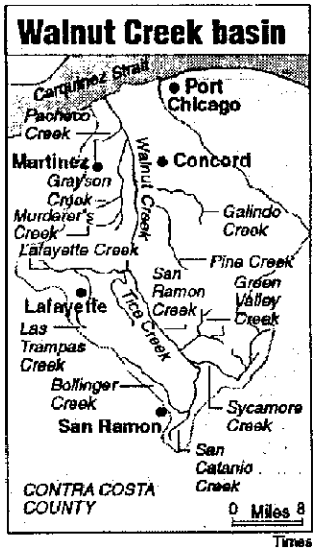
At one location during a recent
t spell, the Walnut Creek water-
ay reached 91.2 degrees, said sur-
y coordinator Ralph Cross. That
mperature was taken near Ban-
oft Road on June 19 after three
ys of air temperatures at or near
e 100-degree mark.

"That's hot," said Pete Alexan-
r, a fisheries specialist with the
ist Bay Regional Park District.
Most fish are going to have a
ugh time with that."

Research indicates Walnut Creek
d its tributaries support dozens of
nds of fish, birds and mammals.

The survey findings, which are
eliminary, indicate that water
mperature is among the most im-
ortant issues that must be ad-
essed as central Contra Costa
mmunities consider creek restora-
on proposals.

Over the decades, Walnut Creek
odifications included straighten-
g channels, removing trees and
rubs, and installing concrete



channel bottoms and waterfalls.

"If we can get some stream-side vegetation along there for shade, that is one of the most important parts of the restoration plan," Alexander said Monday.

Temperature monitoring began in April. Coordinated by the Lindsay Museum of Walnut Creek, it is part of a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency effort to learn more about the health of the nation's waterways.

Heat isn't the only thing that can harm water life. Temperature's effects on the water can hurt it, too.

JON McNALLY/Times

HOT WEATHER and low water have raised water temperatures in Walnut Creek to levels potentially fatal to some fish. Two herons look for food in the creek Monday afternoon near Concord.

Hot water contains less oxygen, which fish need for survival, Alexander said. In addition, some pathogens such as bacteria that can sicken fish thrive in warmer water.

The lower creek's salmon and steelhead are long gone, having already fled for cooler Suisun Bay, said Terry Williamson, a Pleasant Hill councilwoman who has been studying the channel for a master's degree.

Among those still around: catfish, sunfish, bluegill, suckers and sculpin. In previous years, she's observed heat-wave die-offs of suckers and sculpin, which are native species.

Trout once lived in the creek, but they don't like temperatures much above 82, Alexander said. Even some warm-water fish have problems at or above 90 degrees, he said.

Once a month, 20 volunteers take stream temperatures at selected sites at the same time.

The hottest reading on June 19 was measured near the end of a section where water flows for more than a mile through a U-shaped concrete channel, Cross said. The water temperature increased 14 degrees from one end of the section to the other, but cooled somewhat downstream after flowing over a concrete waterfall, he said.

Other streams' temperatures were much healthier, including Las Trampas Creek at 74 degrees and Tice Creek, which ranged from about 72 to 77 degrees.

Some smaller streams, such as Pine Creek, have gone dry for the summer, Cross said. That's to be expected.

But even Williamson, who has long thought that Walnut Creek channel temperatures sometimes exceed 90 degrees, was alarmed by the June 19 data.

"The volunteers are measuring even higher temperatures than I have measured before," she said. "The high I found was 88 degrees and that was after several days of 107-degree weather. The volunteers got 91 degrees after three days of not-that-hot of an event."

With the summer just getting under way, some fish may face doom as hotter months approach, Williamson said.

I-007482

Volunteers to aid spunky fish living in hostile waters

By Tribune news services 8/8/91

MARTINEZ — Contra Costa County supervisors have agreed to coordinate planning for a "fish ladder" to help trout that still swim up the Walnut Creek Channel to spawn in spite of the stream's conversion to a barren urban flood control conduit.

The steelhead trout, noted among species present in Walnut Creek in records dating back to 1855, now swim through the concrete-walled channel past SunValley Mall in Pleasant Hill and the Concord Sheraton hotel complex.

But because of low water due to a fifth year of drought, the fish have trouble trying to clear an 8-foot dam located underneath the busy interchange between Interstate Highway 680 and state Highway 242.

A local fishing club, a Danville industrial construction company, an engineering firm and a lumber supply store joined together in a volunteer effort to build the proposed fish ladder. It would consist of a series of step-like structures that would hold water in small pools where the steelhead could rest as they ascended the man-made barrier.

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors granted the group's request Tuesday for help getting required permits from the Army Corps of Engineers and expert advice on the trout's life cycle from the state Department of Fish and Game.

Terry Palmisano, a state wildlife biologist, said the Fish and Game Department in the past had been reluctant to spend funds or staff time improving conditions for fish in the Walnut Creek channel because it seemed unlikely that steelhead or salmon, another native species, were still using the stream to spawn.

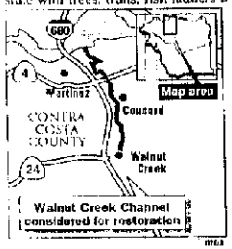
The flood control channel lacks trees or other plants to shade and cool the water, or to provide roots that create small, still pools favored by fish, she said. The channel is inundated with oily, polluted runoff from city streets and toxic substances that residents dump down storm drains.

County to put new life in dirty creek

Agencies figuring how to return Walnut Creek channel to natural state

By Denis Cuff CC Times 8/21/91
Staff writer

WALNUT CREEK – Central County officials are plotting how to restore 11 miles of this area's best known and most neglected creek to a more natural state with trees, trails, fish ladders and pools.



East Bay Regional Park District directors Tuesday hired environmental consultants for a $80,000 study on recreation and habitat improvements in the Walnut Creek channel from Ygnacio Valley Road to the Carquinez Strait.

Officials want to breathe new life into the creek degraded for years by polluted urban runoff and flood control projects that converted dirt banks into cement.

"I think we will get a major creek restoration to restore fisheries, offer recreation opportunities and still meet flood control objectives," said Ted Radke of Martinez, a regional park director. "We're getting all the agencies together on this, which gives us a good chance at success."

Seven agencies chipped in money for the study to be overseen by the park district and performed by the consulting firm of Arbegast, Newton & Griffith, designers of the Martinez Regional Shoreline.

Other sponsors are Walnut Creek, Concord, Pleasant Hill, the Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District, the county Flood Control District and the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District.

Walnut Creek already has spent $2,000,000 on planning restoration of a 2.5-mile-long creek stretch from Rudgear Road to Ygnacio Valley Road. The new multi-agency study focuses on the stretch to the north that flows 11 miles into the Carquinez Strait.

Recreation planners envision shade trees and pools and fish ladders in the creek to make it easier for salmon, steelhead and other fish to feed, breed, and hide from predators, said Steve Hiala, the park district's trail coordinator.

Legalized fishing or bird-watching spots might be set up so creek visitors won't have to continue trespassing along county flood control land to reach the creek, he suggested.

Regional park officials have long-range plans for a trail along or near the creek banks. Feeder trails might be established to link neighborhoods, hotels, or shopping centers with the creek trail.

Hiala and Radke say they don't know the cost or funding source for potential improvements, but they predict federal or state grants will be available for creek restoration.

TIMES File

LANCE ENOCHS [illegible]

I-007484

CENTRAL COUNTY

Channel plan includes trails, native plants

By Mary Mezzocco
Staff writer

A blueprint for restoring the most heavily developed stretch of the Walnut Creek channel has been finished.

The plan calls for building hiking and biking trails along the channel, and planting native trees and grasses along the banks.

Although it runs through heavily commercialized and industrial areas, the 11-mile stretch of Walnut Creek between Ygnacio Valley Road and Suisun Bay is home to 14 protected species. They include the salt marsh harvest mouse, California brown pelican, California black rail and Southwestern pond turtle.

There is little or no public access to the channel, although city officials and residents have been interested in opening it up for recreation for a number of years.

Creekside trails would cost roughly $2.2 million, plus another $200,000 for a link to the Iron Horse Trail. Restoration could cost $20,000 to $30,000 per acre, depending on the option chosen.

Terri Williamson, who helped write sections describing the wildlife now using the creek, said she hopes the option calling for the most restoration is adopted wherever possible.

That option would need more study, however, to be sure it would not create a flood risk, said Williamson, a Pleasant Hill City Council member working on a graduate degree in biology.

'The Walnut Creek plan is more adventuresome, and I think the Army Corps will be watching that to see what happens.'

Pam Romo, longtime advocate of restoration

Flood control engineers generally like slick channels, which can handle more water. Much of the stretch to be restored was put in concrete and rip-rap channels in the 1960s to prevent winter flooding. The concrete culverts would be changed little under this plan.

The bare-bones proposal for restoration would add only a few native grasses to most stretches of the channel. More elaborate versions would build baffles in the culverts where fish could rest.

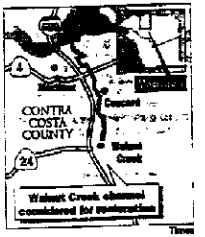
The East Bay Regional Park District is overseeing the multiagency restoration plan, with advice from the county and cities along the stream. An advisory committee will meet March 4 to go over the final draft and discuss a timetable for approval.

One of the challenges will be getting the Army Corps of Engineers and the county flood control office to agree to allow more plants in the channel, said Pam Romo of Walnut Creek, a longtime advocate of restoration.

"They know the old ways," said Romo, who sat on a committee that reviewed drafts of the plan. "They're more comfortable with them. . . . The question is whether we can talk them into trying something new."

The city of Walnut Creek has applied for a state grant to carry out the first step of a similar plan for its downtown channel. That plan is expected to cost almost $12 million to complete.

"The Walnut Creek plan is more adventuresome, and I think the Army Corps will be watching that to see what happens," Romo said.



Times

I-007485

☑ BUCOLIC IS IN, CONCRETE IS OUT

Urban Creeks Going Natural

By John King 10/26/93
Chronicle Staff Writer

By most people's standards, Walnut Creek isn't much to look at these days. From its namesake city north to Suisun Bay, the waterway's twists and turns are confined inside concrete channels or wide dirt ditches.

A few locations remain bucolic and, well, creeklike; most aren't. But many residents nearby are determined to change that — not just to make the creek area an attractive place for picnickers or joggers but also to create a rich ecological refuge for migrating birds, spawning salmon and steelhead trout.

The crusade for Walnut Creek shows the growing sophistication of the urban creek revival — an environmental movement that reaches from affluent suburbs to inner-city neighborhoods. Whatever the location, the motive is the same: People want to turn back the clock, preserving or carving out a unique sense of place in a world where tract housing and retail franchises are the norm.

"A friend of mine told me about seeing someone catch a salmon in Walnut Creek, and I thought, 'Son of a gun, there's even life in an urbanized stream,'" said Terri Williamson, a Pleasant Hill resident who is active in restoration efforts. "As more places get developed, the ones you have are the creeks.... People appreciate that now."

Creek restoration has deep roots in the Bay Area, but it is

URBAN CREEKS Page A6 Col. 1

Urban Creeks Going Natural — Concrete Is Out

From Page 1

also gaining popularity across the country as a way to deal with large ecological issues on a local scale.

Last month, for instance, the national Coalition to Restore Urban Waters met at Fort Mason for its first conference. Speakers from 20 states discussed such topics as "river restoration as a strategy for community restoration." There were debates on legislation to establish a federal grant program for creek restoration, with workers drawn from the government's new National Community Service Corp.

"This very much symbolizes the nationalization of the urban river movement," said A.L. Riley, executive director of the Golden State Wildlife Federation in Berkeley. "The different community groups are realizing they are part of a national network."

Riley, a founder of the coalition, lectures on creek issues across the country. A decade ago, she worked for the state Department of Water Resources, using her free hours to help North Richmond residents battle an attempt to put Wildcat Creek into an artificial basin. The community won in 1985; the final plan relies on natural topography to shape the creek and capture floodwaters that spill over the bank.

The Wildcat Creek fight represents a landmark of the movement's early years. Since then, it has been joined by other Bay Area examples of creek restoration:

■ Lobos Creek, San Francisco's last free-flowing coastal stream, now disappears into culverts before spilling out of a pipe onto Baker Beach. In the new Presidio park plan, by contrast, the final stretch to the ocean would be re-created as a riparian corridor of native trees and shrubs.

■ In Berkeley, block-long stretches of Codornices and Blackberry creeks will be taken out of pipes and brought to the surface. One setting is a school ground, the other an office complex where the developer agreed to the restoration as a way to get approvals for expansion of his building.

■ Last month, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Santa Rosa City Council joined to approve a master plan for Santa Rosa Creek. The campaign was started by Santa Rosa residents who want the creek downtown changed from a drab channel to a center for recreation and wildlife.

"Our motivation is the quality of life," said Bill Knight, a City Council member and architect. "People need a place where they can get off the street, get away from noise."

■ San Jose's $134 million Guadalupe River flood control project includes an elaborate waterside park where native plants will hide gabions, the wire cages filled with rocks that will create an erosion-proof bank. "That project was driven by landscape architecture. We tried to design the flood control around it," said Tom Muncle, a Washington-based hydraulic engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Concrete Channels

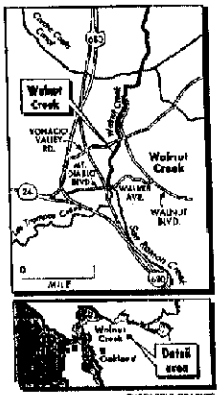
In the boom years after World War II, the philosophy was different. The emphasis was on clean concrete channels that could move water quickly. And suburban builders were eager to take a streamlined approach that left them extra land to develop.

No longer. If residents in an area marked for flood control demand a more sensitive approach than bulldozed ditches, the Corps of Engineers tries to go along.

"A 'greening' of flood control is taking place. We're gradually changing our approach," Muncle said. "California is in the forefront."

Within the state there are variations as well, said Earle Cummings, program manager for the urban streams restoration program of the state Department of Water Resources.

"The citizenry is catching on to the creek restoration movement — and it is a movement," Cummings said. "It's one of those things that has come into its maturity in the Bay Area. In Southern California, it is still in its infancy."



CHRONICLE GRAPHIC

Cummings' job has included distribution of $5 million in restoration grants included in a 1988 state bond. A similar bond measure is headed to next June's ballot — but this time the amount for creeks is $238.6 million, nearly a six-fold increase. No less than $3 million of the bond would go to Walnut Creek alone.

Buried Creek

Walnut Creek's first transformation came when it was buried underneath what is now the city of Walnut Creek's main street/ion, the Broadway Plaza shopping center. In the 1960s, flood control put the northern stretch of the waterway into a vast ditch where vegetation is sprayed with herbicides whenever it starts to flourish.

Then, in the late 1980s, Walnut Creek resident Pam Roma pushed the city to restore the creek and come up with a plan, approved last year, that would control building design and paths along it. Farther north, Terri Williamson turned her attention to the dirt channel that ran north from the area near Sunvalley Mall.

At Williamson's urging, several municipalities pooled funds to study the entire creek system. She and engineer Ralph Cross used volunteers from the Lindsay Museum to chart the water temperatures. If the bond passes, supporters want to plant willows along the channel so that the water will stay cool enough for salmon and trout to flourish.

Pleasurable

Despite the north channel's grim appearance, "once you're in there with the egrets and ducks and muskrats, it can be quite pleasurable," Williamson said.

At Wildcat Creek, the willows planted near Verde Elementary School are only six feet tall, too short to block out the sun and kill the bulrushes that choke the stream. But in time that will change, Riley said. Re-creating nature is different from installing a pipe.

"This is an outdoor laboratory right now," said Riley. "In another 10 years, it should look pretty damn good."

Walnut Creek, CA
(Contra Costa Co.)
Contra Costa Times
(Cir. D. 85,600)
(Cir. S. 92,300)

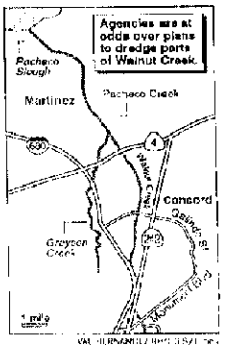
OCT 12 1993

Page B Sec. B

Creek maintenance plan brings protests

Environmentalists, county officials say they deserve a voice

By JAMES BRUGGERS
Staff writer



Efforts to green up the Walnut Creek channel are colliding with obligations to ensure that the much-altered waterway continues to prevent flooding.

For the first time, maintenance to remove sediment and plants has been held up by environmental regulators and the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors.

The conflict comes seven months after adoption of a multiagency plan to revegetate 11 miles of the channel and cut in a recreation trail. That project would extend along the water from Ygnacio Valley Road in Walnut Creek to Waterfront Road east of Martinez.

"The agencies involved in developing the plan were not fully consulted," said Supervisor Sunne McPeak of Concord, who persuaded the board to intervene. "The supervisors don't want (public works engineers) messing around with (the creek) until they get things worked out."

Walnut Creek was once rich in biological resources, but the stream also flooded frequently.

Over the decades, the Army Corps of Engineers straightened sections, removed trees and shrubs, and installed concrete banks and bottoms in some areas.

The design allows water to quickly get to Pacheco Slough and Suisun Bay, guarding against a once-a-century big flood. It protects businesses and homes, said Milt Kubicek, deputy public works director.

Although the corps has ultimate control of the channel, local authority rests with the county, which is responsible for making sure the channel performs according to specifications, Kubicek said.

"I'm not against green," he said. "But my job is to keep this channel from flooding. The first time it comes out of the banks, I get fired and the county gets sued."

To get the job done, public works proposes:

■ Using heavy equipment to haul away 150,000 cubic yards of sediment built up on the engineered flood plain and banks of 1.8 miles of Walnut Creek and 1 mile of Grayson Creek, a tributary. The project is near the Highway 242-Interstate 680 split and Buchanan Field.

■ Replanting disturbed areas with ryegrass and maintaining non-native species with herbicides.

■ Excavating and rebuilding a portion of the stream.

It's the kind of work the county has done for years, Kubicek said.

This year, the corps decided regulations require a permit for the work, Kubicek said. He accused the staff of the agency's San Francisco office, which is handling the matter, of allowing bias to cloud their judgment.

"We have no reason to be biased," said agency spokesman Michael Reuss. "We are a public agency that's trying to work with all the competing interests, whether it is development or environmental protection. We will be as impartial as possible."

The corps has not decided whether to issue a permit. In a preliminary environmental assessment, it said the project would reduce flood hazards, but at a cost to the environment.

Among its findings:

■ The project would destroy 10 acres of wetlands, and "along a flowing stream in an area where such habitat is rare (the loss) is considered a major adverse impact."

■ Replacing a mosaic of vegetation with a "ryegrass herbicide-treated monoculture" would result in a "moderately adverse impact."

The project, to start next year, prompted additional critical comments from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game and East Bay Regional Park District.

It also angered creek advocate Jean Williamson, a Pleasant Hill councilwoman.

"If they are going to go down into the channel and bulldoze the channel, that just kills things."

Even in its altered condition, the creek supports salmon, steelhead, waterfowl and many other kinds of animals and plants, said Williamson, who has studied the creek's biology for a master's degree.

"The channel's revegetation and recreation plan seeks to help nature hold on while addressing flood concerns," she said.

Kubicek said his department does not oppose environmental enhancement as long as the channel retains full flood-control capacity.

The community needs to realize that allowing stream-side vegetation such as cattails and shrubs, which are growing back on their own, requires design changes that could cost up to $5 million, he said. "We don't have the money."

McPeak questioned that figure. "They will have to prove that to me."

Creek advocates are seeking federal funding.

The corps spends millions each year on projects that make up for "past sins," Williamson said.

I-007487

Both F+I

Creek dredging approval likely under new plan

By JAMES BRUGGERS
Staff writer CC Times 3/30

A dredging project for Walnut and Grayson creeks appears close to winning approval seven months after it was delayed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Environmental regulators found a less destructive way to perform flood control maintenance. They have been unable, however, to determine how to restore the waterway to a more natural condition without putting businesses and homes at risk of flooding.

The corps, the agency with the final say, is about to let Contra Costa County Flood Control District begin digging in the channels. Last-minute details should be worked out within two weeks, corps spokesman Michael Kelss said Tuesday.

Last summer, the corps blocked routine dredging for the first time, following the adoption of a multi-agency plan to rehabilitate the much-altered Walnut Creek channel. That plan envisions a return of stream-side shade trees, gravel spawning beds, fish ladders and a recreational trail.

The county last year sought to haul away 150,000 cubic yards of sediment built up on the banks of 1.5 miles of Walnut Creek and one mile of Grayson Creek, a tributary. The project is near the Highway 242-Interstate 680 interchange and Buchanan Field.

Disturbed areas were to be replanted with non-native rye grass and maintained with herbicides.

Under the compromise, dredging will be allowed only on one side of each stream at a time, said Craig Vassel, a corps planner in San Francisco.

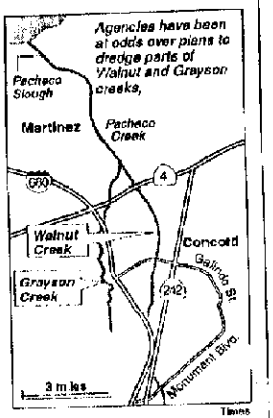
The county will have to wait at least a year before tampering with the other side, Vassel said.

In addition to replanting with rye grass, workers will be required to spread plant material scraped from the surface over the top of disturbed areas, Vassel said. The corps does not have the authority to block the use of herbicides, he added.

County officials anxiously await the permit, said Milt Kubicek, deputy public works director.

With silt building up and plants growing thicker, the corps permit is needed now, Kubicek said. Because dredging can only be done in the summer, when the water level is low, the county needs to begin looking for a contractor soon, Kubicek said.

"I don't know what the hang-up is," he added.



Among questions still under examination is whether one year is enough time to wait between dredging each stream bank, Vassel said.

Over the decades, the corps straightened sections of the Walnut Creek waterway, removed trees and shrubs and installed concrete banks, bottoms and waterfalls in some areas. Despite the changes, surveys have found spawning salmon and steelhead and many other kinds of wildlife and plants.

Flood control maintenance was criticized by representatives of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, state Fish and Game Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and East Bay Regional Park District.

An environmental assessment determined dredging would destroy 10 acres of wetlands and replace a mosaic of vegetation with a "rye grass, herbicide-treated monoculture."

Eventually, measures can be taken to rehabilitate the Walnut Creek channel, but they cost more money than is currently available and are the subject of ongoing discussion, Kubicek said.

One thing is certain, he added: The channel's ability to carry water out of Central County quickly cannot be compromised.

I-007488

■ WALNUT CREEK

Idea to Restore Namesake Of the Town

By Carl Nolte 9/18/91
Chronicle Staff Writer

They are thinking of restoring the creeks that gave Walnut Creek its name — and about time. Walnut Creek, the stream, is a concrete ditch, a disgrace to Walnut Creek, the city. The creek plus Las Trampas and San Ramon creeks, two tributaries, were sanitized for flood protection years ago.

In announcing the formation of a Creek Task Force, the Walnut Creekians praised Boulder, Colo., Ashland, Ore., and San Antonio, Texas, for making waterways a vital part of their cities.

If anyone wanted to see what could be done with a waterway, they had only look to Pleasant Hill and Concord, right next door, where the once ugly-duckling Contra Costa Canal has been turned into a civic jewel, with a bike path, landscaping and other goodies.

The canal, which runs through backyards, over hill and dale bringing water from the Delta to Contra Costa, was finished in 1948, when walnuts still grew in Walnut Creek and central Contra Costa was one huge orchard, with a few towns. Now look.